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ABSTRACT

Three stories were presented via audiovisual media to each of three classes in grade two, three classes in grade four, and three in grade six. Children were interviewed individually after the presentations and were asked which misdemeanor in the stories was naughtiest, whether the punishment was fair, what punishment would be fair, and why. Results indicated a pattern of evolution from heteronomy to autonomy across the grade levels, substantiating Piaget's theory of moral development. However, all three grade levels were hampered by adult constraint. Second graders needed an atmosphere that would nurture spontaneous verbalizing and the expression of children's opinions. Fourth-graders, who had a cooperative attitude toward peers, indicated a need for equality in behavior between children and adults. Sixth graders lacked mutual respect between children and adults in the area of determining fair punishment; they needed practice in self-governance. (Author/AA)

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MORAL JUDGMENT IN CHILDREN: THEIR RESPONSES TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE EXAMINED AGAINST PIAGET'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Myra Weiger

During the last decade there has been a surge of interest in the development of moral judgment in children, as evidenced by both theoretical and empirical writings in the fields of psychology and education. Sixty years earlier, John Dewey wrote Moral Principles in Education, published in 1909; the next major work to appear was Jean Piaget's The Moral Judgment of the Child, first published in 1932 and considered now to be a classic.

In Piaget's investigation of children aged six to thirteen, he found that the subjects ascended a scale, moving from a morality of constraint or heteronomy to a morality of cooperation or autonomy in three major stages. During the first stage, which lasts up to the age of seven or eight, justice is subordinated to adult authority; the second stage, progressive equalitarianism, occurs approximately between the ages of eight and eleven and is characterized by the development of cooperation and autonomy; the third stage sets in toward ages eleven or twelve during which purely equalitarian justice is tempered by consideration of equity. Many replications of Piaget's research have been conducted, and they have, in the main, supported his theoretical findings. Chandler, Greenspan, and Barenboim; Buchanan and Thompson; McKechnie; Armsby;

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Costanzo, Coie, Grumet, and Farnhill; Hebble; King; Gutkin; Weiner; Whiteman and Kosier; and Hallam conducted studies that confirmed the intentionality facet of Piaget's theory of moral development. Other focal points of Piaget's theory were validated by the research of Krahn; McCullough; Huckabay; DiNola; Simon and Ward; Solomon and Druckman; Decker; Fay; and Strang.[1]

The present study was designed to investigate the responses of children ages seven, nine, and eleven to moral issues in selected pieces of children's literature, and to examine the results against Piaget's developmental stages. Secondarily, the investigator wanted to discover whether or not the children's literature that children actually read is appropriate developmentally for them according to Piaget's stages of moral development.

Children's literature was used instead of original story-pairs because Piaget suggested that his interrogatories with children regarding their moral judgment were about "reality once removed."[2] The children evaluated situations presented in brief stories formulated by Piaget about others. The writer of this paper wanted to present

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[1]References to studies mentioned are included in the bibliography.

[2]Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 112.

subjects with "stories" they would assimilate as experiences of their own and selected children's literature for more realistic responses. One could suggest that the experiencing of a work of literature means being absorbed into the drama of the work; this imaginative experience parallels in its elements the nature of a real experience. Thus, as real experience frequently calls into play moral judgment, so the imaginative experiencing of a work of literature calls into being the moral imagination.[3] In reading literature one comes closest to the ebb and flow of everyday human activity. The reader feels the relationships of the story as he is carried through the experiences and becomes deeply involved. In making things real, language cannot help but give them value and meaning.[4]

Procedures

Sample

The subjects of this study were 180 children, sixty children (three classes) from each of three grade levels: second, fourth, and sixth grade. The grade levels corre-

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[3]James E. Miller, Jr., "Literature and the Moral Imagination," in Response to Literature, ed. by James R. Squire (Ill.: NCTE, 1968), p. 29.

[4]John Dixon, Growth Through English (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 57.

spond with ages seven, nine, and eleven which Piaget theorizes are the appropriate times when children move from one stage of moral development to the next. The classes were composed of children from middle-class homes, with a balance of white and black pupils comparable to national percentages. The nine classes and the pupils in them were deemed normal by the criterion of I.Q.'s ranging from 90 to 110.

Materials

Seven books were selected, three to be experienced by pupils in the second, fourth, and sixth grades according to the recommended interest and reading levels of the literature, as shown on Table 1.

TABLE 1

SELECTION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's Literature	Grades		
	2	4	6
Hoban. THE SORELY TRYING DAY.	X		
Ness. SAM, BANGS, AND MOONSHINE.	X		
Ungerer. NO KISS FOR MOTHER.	X	X	
Brink. CADDIE WOODLAWN.		X	
Estes. THE HUNDRED DRESSES.		X	X
Beech. QUEENIE PEAVY.			X
Collodi. PINOCCHIO.			X

The criteria used in choosing the books were (a) their rating as good literature; (b) their suggested readers' levels of ages seven, nine, and eleven or the comparable grade levels; (c) their content in terms of situations involving moral issues raised in adult-child and/or peer group relationships and situations involving punishment; and (d) their inclusion of both realism and fantasy with which children can identify.

Each book was presented through one or more audiovisual media. These media included tape cassettes, slides, and records, on which the stories were either narrated or dramatized. Audiovisual media were purchased or prepared for the presentation of children's literature to make the experiences more immediate, to include in the study subjects with reading problems, and to enable the investigator to interview subjects immediately after their exposure to the stories.

Method

The investigation was conducted over a period of nine weeks; individual classes were presented with three stories during that period. Each visit was scheduled for two hours. During those two hours, the investigator introduced the literature briefly, presented the story via audiovisual media in a relaxed atmosphere for no less than

ten minutes and no more than fifty, and, immediately after, interviewed each child in that class for his or her opinions about the salient points and the moral situations in the story. The classroom teachers were not present during the introduction and presentation of children's literature, but they resumed their classroom roles as the investigator conducted individual interviews. Each interview was recorded on tape for later analysis.

The subjects of each class were questioned first about their perceptions of the salient points in the literature they experienced. The salient points were: (1) 'misbehaviors' of the main characters; (2) reasons for the misbehaviors, considering the intentionality of the characters; and (3) punishments sustained. It was then possible to proceed to the subjects' moral judgments concerning those salient points. The investigator, in language simple enough to make the questions clear, asked the subjects: (1) which act of misbehavior in the story they thought was the naughtiest; (2) what were their reasons for thinking so; (3) whether or not the punishment was fair; and (4) if not, what punishment would be fair, with their reasons for that judgment.

Analysis of Data

First, the responses of the 180 subjects, sixty on

each grade level, to questions about the salient points of the literature were tabulated to indicate the percentages of second, fourth, and sixth-graders who understood specific misbehaviors, motivations, and punishments set forth in stories deemed appropriate for them. The subjects' perceptions of the salient points revealed their understanding of the story-facts in each presentation of literature, which served as a base for the discussion of moral issues. Second, the responses indicating the subjects' moral judgments about the misbehaviors and punishments were stratified according to Piaget's three stages of moral development. The investigation did not depend upon the subjects' perceptions of the salient points, since the subjects' levels of moral judgment were determined by their reasoning, not simply by their selections of the worst behavior and the most appropriate punishment. The responses to the three stories for each grade level, set forth in narrative form, were compared and analyzed, and speculations were made about the data.

General Conclusions

All of the subjects appeared to enjoy the literary experiences they shared with the investigator. Their positive attitude, which seemed to support Louise Rosenblatt's claim that experience with literature is not pas-

sive but demands intensive personal activity, validated the use of children's literature as a medium of exploration concerning the subjects' moral development. Rosenblatt considers literature to be intensely human and feels that the sciences that describe and explain human conduct can contribute much to the study of literature.[5] Piaget's taxonomy of moral behavior is one such device that can be used to help understand the dilemmas which literature presents to us.

Perceptions of Salient Points

Though all of the pieces of children's literature were selected to suit the age level of the subjects, there was a difference in their perceptions of the salient points (i.e. the motivations, misdemeanors, and punishments), as shown on Table 2.

One-hundred percent of the fourth-graders and sixth-graders recognized all of the misdemeanors in the stories presented to them; 100 percent of the second-graders recognized one misdemeanor, with 88 to 97 percent of the respondents perceiving the remaining misdemeanors.

The motivations were not so widely perceived as the misdemeanors. From 13 percent to 83 percent of the second-

[5]Louise Rosenblatt, Literature As Exploration (New York: Noble and Noble, 1968), p. 137.

TABLE 2

PERCEPTIONS OF SALIENT POINTS
(Indicated in Percentages)

Moral Issues[a]	Second Grade			Fourth Grade			Sixth Grade		
	Sorely Trying Day	Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine[b]	No Kiss for Mother[c]	No Kiss for Mother	Caddie Woodlawn	The Hundred Dresses	Adventures of Pinocchio	The Hundred Dresses	Queenie Peavy
Misdemeanors									
1	100	92	97	100	100	100	100	100	100
2	88	92	97	100	100	100	100	100	100
3	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-
Motivations									
1	72	13	22	25	100	93	100	95	100
2	55	13	38	55	100	73	100	100	100
3	-	-	83	93	-		-	-	-
Punishments									
1	92	42	47	48	92	55	82	73	45

[a]Number of moral issues varies in different stories.
[b]No response to interview: 8 percent.
[c]No response to interview: 3 percent.

graders recognized the motivations in their literature. One-hundred percent of the fourth-graders understood the motivations in one story; from 25 percent to 93 percent perceived the motivations in the two remaining stories. One-hundred percent of the sixth-graders understood all but one motivation, which was perceived by 95 percent of the sample.

There was, in general, less understanding of punishments sustained. The major punishments in the stories were perceived by 42, 47, and 92 percent of the second-graders; 48, 55, and 92 percent of the fourth-graders; and 45, 73, and 82 percent of the sixth-graders. There was little appreciable difference in the subjects' understanding of punishments sustained in the stories, as to grade level.

Why were the salient points perceived unevenly within, as well as across, the grade levels? The misdemeanors may have been recognized by all or most of the respondents on each grade level because they were clearly defined, as well as exciting, and comprised the forward action of the plot. The misdemeanors might be called major facts of the story. Children are taught to look for and recall facts when they begin to read and are encouraged to perfect that skill throughout their school years. They are also taught to be careful and not do things wrong!

Increasingly more students perceived the motivations in the stories as the grade levels progressed upward, from second to sixth grade. The motivations were of different degrees of subtlety and sophistication and were mentioned or implied briefly, in many stories across the grade levels. The motivations might be considered the feelings in the stories. As children become more familiar with the techniques involved in reading and the learning of facts, they interact more with the characters and respond to feelings and innuendo. As the grade levels advance, stories are longer and more complex and the characters are more fully developed, evoking empathy to a more extensive degree. Young children are more interested in results than in motivation because they are accustomed to do "the right thing," as they are told. Children begin to think about motivations when they are no longer governed by adult constraint and make their own decisions.

There was less understanding of punishments sustained in the stories, in general. Punishments usually occurred toward the end of the literary pieces, when the subjects may have been tired and ready for the "commercial break" of televised stories. The subjects may not have attended to the punishments because they were "acted upon" the main characters, differing from the misdemeanors that were the

characters' own actions; the punishments may not have brought forth the same degree of participation in the story as the misdemeanors. On all three grade levels, the punishments most widely understood were those stated specifically for uncomplicated misdemeanors; were verbalized again as the story progressed; were necessary to the forward action of the plot; and/or were typical punishments administered by authority figures. The subjects appeared to be unaccustomed to subtle punishments and to the analyzation of misdemeanors in terms of appropriate punishments.

Moral Judgments

Further conclusions can be drawn through looking at the moral judgments and levels of reasoning of subjects on the three grade levels, as shown on Table 3. There is a general trend for the subjects to move through Piaget's stages of moral development as they advance from second-grade to sixth-grade.

A noticeably high percentage of second-graders (78 to 95 percent) reasoned according to Piaget's Stage I level of moral development when judging the most wrongful act and fair punishment in all three pieces of children's literature. Subjects were classified on Stage I when their responses indicated a belief in retributive justice, expiation, immanent justice, moral reasoning, objective respon-

TABLE 3

RESPONSES CONGRUENT WITH PIAGET'S AGE-STAGES
(Indicated in Percentages)

Stages	Second Grade			Fourth Grade			Sixth Grade		
	Sorely Trying Day	Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine[a]	No Kiss for Mother[b]	No Kiss for Mother	Caddie Woodlawn	The Hundred Dresses	Adventures of Pinocchio	The Hundred Dresses	Queenie Peavy
Naughtiest Behavior									
I	85	85	95	95	75	87	33	37	45
II	13	5	2	5	15	10	25	21	7
III	2	2	-	-	10	3	42	42	48
Fair Punishment									
I	92	78	89	93	62	20	63	5	62[c] 28[d]
II	3	7	6	7	27	65	14	75	23 62
III	5	7	2	-	11	15	23	20	15 10

[a]No response to interview: 8 percent.

[b]No response to interview: 3 percent.

[c]Levels of reasoning for Queenie's punishment.

[d]Levels of reasoning for Cravey's punishment.

sibility, and authority. A small percentage (2 to 13 percent) judged wrongful acts and fair punishment according to Piaget's Stage II, with concern for cooperation and reciprocity. Reciprocity occurs in its initial stages among friends the same age, and then that mutual respect among peers leads to equality behavior between children and adults. The Sorely Trying Day, which evoked the greatest percentage of reasoning in terms of cooperation and reciprocity, dealt with interactions among a group of children. Most Stage II responses in the other two stories dealt with peer relationships, also. Few second-graders (2 to 7 percent) reasoned on Stage III.

The second-grade subjects, responding primarily on Stage I, appeared to substantiate Piaget's theory of moral development on that level. The figures suggest that it is possible for second-graders to reason beyond Stage I, and the home and classroom should encourage it. Only in the second-grade sample was there a lack of response; eight percent when interviewed about Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine and three percent when interviewed about No Kiss for Mother. The second-grade subjects, in general, did not respond readily to the questions, requiring a great deal of concentration and thinking time. Their difficulty in responding may stem from adult constraint, which consoli-

dates childish verbalism at home and in school. When adults' words are spoken with authority rather than cooperation in adult-child relationships, the spontaneous verbalism of young children is concretized and they refrain from experiment and free discussion. Though adult constraint is necessary in the lives of very young children and is part of the process of moral development, it must give way to cooperation if growth is to take place.

The fourth-grade responses showed a large percentage (75 to 95 percent) of the subjects reasoning on Stage I in the selection of wrongful acts; less (20 to 93 percent) reasoned according to Piaget's Stage I when selecting fair punishment. The fourth-grade sample appeared to reason on a higher stage in dealing with fair punishment than in judging wrongful acts.

More subjects in the fourth-grade sample responded on Stages II and III than in the second-grade sample. From 5 to 65 percent of the fourth-graders judged wrongful acts and fair punishment in accord with Piaget's Stage II. Subjects were classified on Stage II when their responses indicated a belief in punishment based upon reciprocity, moral action for its own sake, and equality. It is difficult to ascertain how much progress into Stage II reasoning would be considered appropriate for the subjects, who were

almost nine or recently-turned nine. Approximately two-thirds of the fourth-graders judged fair punishment on Stage II when the misdemeanors and punishments were contained within the peer group. A smaller proportion responded on Stage II when the misdemeanors occurred among peers and the punishment was administered by an adult. Few responded on Stage II when the misdemeanors and punishment were between a child and adult figures. In No Kiss for Mother, the story was so influenced by adult constraint that most of the sample responded on Stage I and no one reasoned according to Stage III. When children's moral judgment is evolving into the mutual respect and cooperation of Stage II, reciprocity occurs first among friends the same age, while relationships with authority figures remain on the prior stage of heteronomy. Furthermore, when children have to think of a punishment themselves, they often turn to expiatory punishment or think of the punishment they have experienced, which may account for some Stage I responses. From 3 to 15 percent of the sample judged wrongful acts and fair punishment in accord with Piaget's Stage III, when responding to the other two stories for that level.

The fourth-grade subjects, evolving into Stage II, appeared to substantiate Piaget's theory of moral development, with their uneven responses indicating a pattern of

transition. The mutual respect among peers, as indicated in the responses, could lead to equality behavior between children and adults if adult constraint were withdrawn. The fourth-grade sample was the only group that wished to discuss personal problems with the investigator, seeking an equality exchange, though their responses to child-adult relationships in the literature were still on a heteronomous level.

Though the sixth-grade responses were uneven also, more subjects responded on Stages II and III than in the fourth-grade sample. Within the sixth-grade sample, a noticeably higher percentage of subjects reasoned according to Piaget's Stage III when judging wrongful acts, with consistent responses, than when selecting fair punishment. Subjects were classified on Stage III when their responses indicated a belief in subjective responsibility and a consideration for individual differences and attenuating circumstances before applying punishment. The sixth-graders, who were almost eleven or recently-turned eleven, were evolving into Stage III reasoning in the judgment of wrongful acts sooner than in the selection of fair punishment. From 42 to 48 percent of the sixth-graders based their selection of wrongful acts in their three stories on subjective responsibility (the intentionality of the main

characters), while a small percentage (10 to 23 percent) selected fair punishment according to Piaget's Stage III.

Three-fourths of the sixth-graders judged fair punishment on Stage II, in terms of reciprocity, when the misdemeanors and punishments were contained within the peer group. Almost two-thirds responded on Stage II when the misdemeanor occurred among peers and the punishment allowed restitution. On the other hand, almost two-thirds of the sixth-graders selected fair punishment on Piaget's Stage I when the misdemeanors and punishments were between a child and authority figures. The Stage II mutual respect among peers that the sample seemed to understand had not progressed to equality behavior between children and adults in dealing with punishments.

The sixth-grade subjects, evolving into Stage III reasoning, substantiated Piaget's theory of moral development, with their uneven responses indicating a pattern of transition. The sixth-grade sample was influenced by adult constraint to a lesser degree than the fourth-grade sample, but enough to hamper moral development; the sixth-graders reasoned on lower stages in the area of fair punishment than in judging wrongful acts. The procedure of having punishment acted upon one, in itself, is representative of adult constraint. The sixth-graders, who

gave the lengthiest responses during the interviews and the widest range of reasoning, could become responsible for analzing and determining their own punishments.

Children's Literature

The children seemed to enjoy all of the stories presented to them. Their pleasure appeared to be unrelated to their recollection of salient points or their level of moral judgment in the specific stories. There are so many levels of understanding that it is difficult to know what children receive from the literature they experience. For that reason, the stories will be considered only in regard to their suitability for the moral development of each grade level, according to Piaget's age-stages and the results of this investigation.

The Sorely Trying Day.--The motivations and misdemeanors were typical for second-graders. Young children are frequently engaged in acts of clumsiness, or "accidents," and lie to avert adult vengeance for the resultant damage. The parents administered a punishment common to the sample: the children were deprived of their favorite activity and sent to bed after dinner for the remainder of the week. When the children asked if they must be punished after changing their "story" and admitting their guilt, Father said,

> Every action has its consequences and bad acts must be punished so that they will not be repeated. However, there are only three days left in the week so you have only a little punishment to endure.

His first statement reflected expiation; his second statement reflected retributive justice. The Sorely Trying Day was representative of the heteronomy, or adult constraint, of Stage I. The interrelationships among peers allowed for reasoning on the next stage higher.

Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine.--Sam's motivation and misdemeanor were representative of second-grade thought and behavior. Without attempting to deceive, Sam distorted reality in accordance with her desires and fantasies; she did not know the difference between what was real and what was "moonshine." Father told Sam "to talk REAL not MOONSHINE. MOONSHINE spells trouble," in an attempt to curb her lying. Sam's reasons to stop lying were to obey Father (adult constraint) and/or to avoid bad consequences (objective responsibility). The punishment was common to second-graders: Sam was sent to bed to think about what she had done. Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine was so representative of the heteronomous thought of Stage I that it might be an ideal vehicle for further activities and discussion.

No Kiss For Mother.--Piper Paw's defiance of adult authority did not reflect the moral development of either the second-graders or the fourth-graders, though both levels

appeared to enjoy the story. There was neither adult constraint nor cooperation depicted. Piper's individuality might suit the Stage III thinking of the sixth-graders better. The story prompted the highest percentage of Stage I judgments in the investigation, for both areas of reasoning, common to both grade levels. It was the only story to evoke no responses on Stage III, common to both grade-levels. The material was probably outside of the realm of the subjects' moral reasoning, and they followed a natural inclination to revert to heteronomous thinking. Though No Kiss For Mother appeared to be inappropriate for the moral levels of the subjects, it provided a great deal of amusement and could be read for enjoyment, a change of pace from other literature, a look at the unique style of drawing, dramatic interpretation, and general discussion.

Caddie Woodlawn.--The motivations and misdemeanors were typical for fourth-graders. Caddie acted autonomously when she went to the Indian camp, against her parents' wishes, to warn the Indians of impending danger. She behaved cooperatively when she joined her brothers in teasing Cousin Annabelle, even though she didn't want to continue. The punishment administered by Mother, who whacked her and sent her to bed, was representative of Stage I

thinking, but Caddie's anger at being the only one punished reflected Stage II reasoning. Her brothers spoke up, exemplifying group responsibility, and were punished as well. Overall, Caddie Woodlawn was representative of the autonomy, or cooperation, of Stage II. Attenuating circumstances in the story allowed for reasoning on the next level higher, Stage III.

The Hundred Dresses.--The motivations and misdemeanors were typical for fourth-graders, though both fourth-graders and sixth-graders enjoyed the story. The experiences were common to both grade-levels. Influenced by cooperation, Maddie joined Peggy and her other friends in their taunting of Wanda, though she did not like to do it. She was afraid to defy "the group." There was a suggestion of Stage III subjective responsibility when Maddie thought that she was more at fault than Peggy because she knew better. That idea was perceived more readily by the sixth-graders. No mention was made of punishment and no punishment was administered by an adult figure. The internal punishment, a matter of conscience suffered as a result of the girls' acts, may be considered a form of Stage II reciprocity. The story elicited the two highest percentages of Stage II reasoning for the selection of fair punishments, one in the fourth-grade and

the higher one in the sixth-grade sample. The Hundred Dresses, comprised of peer group relationships and interactions, was representative of the cooperation of Stage II, with a suggestion of the inner responsibility of Stage III.

The Adventures of Pinocchio.--The motivations and misdemeanors spanned the three levels of moral development. Though Pinocchio behaved autonomously in many of his actions, he attained what he wanted through adult constraint of Stage I and restitution of Stage II. He suffered the consequences of defying adult authority (Stage I); breaking the bond of solidarity (Stage II); and making independent decisions (Stage III). The punishments were primarily on Stage I, with the variations of immanent justice, expiation, retributive justice, and adult constraint. Some punishments represented the reciprocity of Stage II. Though The Adventures of Pinocchio spanned the three levels of moral development, it was most representative of the heteronomy, or adult constraint, of Stage I, and it influenced responses in that direction. Younger children could enjoy listening to a simplified version with visual reinforcement.

Queenie Peavy.--The motivations and misdemeanors were representative of sixth-grade thought and action. The unique Queenie Peavy evolved, through the events of the story, into a self-governing individual. There were attenuating circum-

stances for all of her wrongful acts, and she was, at heart, a kind and sensitive person. The punishments administered to her and to Cravey Mason were forms of Stage II restitution, applied according to their individual circumstances, which is an application of Stage III equity. Queenie Peavy was representative of the inner responsibility and equity of Stage III reasoning. The moving and complex story should be given more time and discussion to allow for moral growth in its audience.

Implications for Teaching

It was found that all three grade-levels were hampered by adult constraint. The second-graders, who had difficulty in responding to the interview, should be provided with an atmosphere that nurtures their spontaneous verbalization and the expression of their opinions. There should be many small-group activities in the classroom, in which the members may speak as they work together. There should be time for free conversation among the class members on a regular basis. Language and communication develop when children have the opportunity to analyze words, meanings, and ideas. When children present ideas that are accepted, they are encouraged to participate in further discussion.

The fourth-graders, who revealed a cooperative atti-

tude toward peers, indicated a need for cooperative behavior between child and adult. The classroom atmosphere should provide examples of cooperation between children and adult figures. Adults should show that they, too, make mistakes, and they should give reasons for their actions and decisions. Adults can join group discussions as equal participants. It should be understood that the classroom "belongs" to the students, as well as to the teacher, and that the students have the responsibility to make decisions about many classroom procedures. Mutual respect enhances the ego-strength and the moral judgment. There is a need for group discussion of moral issues among peers, utilizing fiction, current events, and life situations. Eventually, adults may participate as equals.

The sixth-graders lacked mutual respect between children and adults in the area of considering punishments. Children need practice in evaluating their own behavior and determining their own punishments on their road to self-governance. Their classroom atmosphere should respect independent thinking, promote open discussions, and require decision-making. The students will learn only through living with the consequences of their own decisions.

The current study supports the idea that the field of English/Language Arts is an excellent avenue for values

education, particularly through literature as a source of moral experience.

Values education, which has been promoted primarily in the teaching of social studies, requires the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Children must be able to communicate with themselves and with others, and they must be able to organize their thoughts. The language arts class may develop moral judgment, using moral issues as a topic for the practice and improvement of skills basic to communication. Material may be presented to the students orally for attentive and analytical listening and in print for reading comprehension. Responses may take the form of speeches, discussion, debate, and different forms of written expression, all requiring critical thinking about the moral issues.

Role-playing, which is important in the developmental process and can implement the transition to Stage II reciprocity, can be a major part of both the language and the literature programs. Children can play the roles of the characters in a moral dilemma that they have created or that has been authored by someone else. Children may devise the situations orally or they may write their own plays; and their ideas may come from any source, including newspapers, life, and the imagination. Ideas for role-

playing may come to the teachers' attention through their professional reading or their observations of children. Children's literature presents a considerable supply of characters and plots for role-playing, or creative dramatics, which deepens the understanding of the stories as well as the understanding of the self and others.

In reading literature, children experience more of life's activities. The literature is largely internalized and can involve the full play of the human personality - the rational powers, the emotional reactions, the ethical commitments.[6] Literature should be explored in a response-oriented curriculum, in which literary experiences are followed with questions designed to promote discussion rather than to reiterate facts. Questions like "What do you think of _____?" or "Do you think that _____ should have _____?" or "What would you have done if you had been _____?" followed by the eternal "Why?" foster reasoning in children, which may be applied to life situations with sufficient practice. The questions allow for different responses (not answers) which may be more or less complex, more or less mature. Thus, together the questions and responses provide

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[6]James R. Squire, "Toward a Response-Oriented Curriculum in Literature," in New English, New Imperatives, ed. by Henry B. Maloney (Ill.: NCTE, 1971), p. 92.

occasion for observation of growth.[7]

Children's literature provides an effective method of developing moral judgment in children because it deals with moral experience at every age. Furthermore, it is accessible to children and adults; it fulfills many needs of children; and it represents a normal or natural pastime that may continue throughout life, in all of its variety.

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[7]Wallace Douglas, "On Historical Influences in English Teaching," in Response to Literature, ed. by James R. Squire (Ill.: NCTE, 1968), p. 59.

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